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Guide

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Does God Punish?

God's Plan Fulfilled

Church and Bible

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A "New" Apologetics?

Father Nebreda's *Kerygma in Crisis* (a book every catechist should read) contains all kinds of good things. Not the least worthy of his suggestions is a plea for the return of "apologetics," faithful to the insights of the theological renewal, and in the form of a Pre-evangelization. Approaching the same need, F. H. Drinkwater has this to say:

"The practical issue is what kind of attitude Christians and Catholics in particular, should cultivate towards these latest (secular-humanist) forms of organized opposition. Briefly, I think we ought to remember Second Vatican, and practice an unremitting kindness—kind thoughts, kind words, kind actions—to all our fellow humans, since this is the only way to win them to God's truth and Christ's Church. If people cannot believe in Christianity, or if they have lost faith in it, we should have every consideration for them and for their position; faith in Christianity is a gift and they haven't got it.

"If people disbelieve in God altogether the case is a little different. We should have every consideration for them, because they are probably in revolt against some false image of God (which they may even have acquired from us). But I don't think we should have any exaggerated respect for their intellectual position, because it is not worthy of respect. Whatever difficulties there are about belief in God (and God knows they are considerable, especially the problem of evil when it comes home to anybody personally) the difficulties of denying God are incomparably greater, ending in impossible contradictions and moral absurdities, which ought to be pointed out. Some Catholics (it seems to me) are getting a little too nervously polite and propitiating about this; we still need a touch of the old Chestertonian laughter, even of the ironical burly-mindedness of Belloc."

Neither Nebreda nor Drinkwater want a return to the old apologetics anymore than a revival of the old catechetics. But there is definitely a time and place for an advocate's presentation of Christianity. And we do many of our contemporaries a disservice when we neglect it.

JOHN T. McGINN, C.S.P.

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Pre-Catechumenate Instructions

God's Plan Fulfilled

Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

With this issue we complete our presentation of salvation history. This series covers the basic belief of the Church and can be used as the core of any adult catechesis. We have described it here as "pre-catechumenate instruction" because it was prepared especially for non-Catholics who inquire about the Catholic faith. Some of these will decide to enter the Church and will then need a further period of preparation and formation in the Christian life. This is the catechumenate proper, and it calls for a different kind of format and materials. One such program has been prepared by the Paulist Institute and is designed to follow these pre-catechumenate instructions. It will not be printed here because the entire program is now available in book form. It will be published by Newman Press this month under the title "A parish Catechumenate," by Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P.

Tonight we complete our presentation of the history of man's salvation. During the past weeks we have traced the main events that carried God's message and life into the life of men. We have seen how God began his plan and have emphasized the big moments in its history. We have seen how these big moments, and especially the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, have decided the relationship between God and man ever since. We have seen, too, how God continues to work the salvation of men through his Church and its life-giving actions that are the sacraments. Tonight we shall look at the completion of that history. Not the end, because salvation is never-ending, but rather the final events in the story. When these are over, there

will be nothing left to be done and the relation between man and God will be perfectly stabilized forever.

There is one last act in the drama of salvation still to take place. Jesus has worked out the salvation of mankind, yet much of what he has done is hidden from all but his faithful followers. However, one day everything that has been accomplished will be revealed for everyone to see. Then all of the things that Christ has received will be fully experienced by his people. Man and God have already been reconciled in Christ and those who accept Christ and commit themselves to him have already received the life of God. However, they live this life with God in this world. This means that they don't see God, that they live it partly in darkness, partly amidst pain and suffering and death, as well as in joy and hope and happiness. But at the completion of things these limitations will all disappear and God's people will see him face to face and there will be no more pain, suffering or death.

► Reading from Apoc. 21:1-4

At that time, Jesus will return in his kingly glory for all the world to see. Then he will not be the humble carpenter from Nazareth whom so many failed to recognize. Instead he will appear obviously as the Son of God, and King of the universe. At that time, too, all those who have lived since the world began will rise from the dead and undergo his final judgment.

► Reading from Thess. 4:13-18

Death, you remember, is a result of sin. But once Jesus overcame sin, the days of death were numbered. Christ broke through death in his resurrection, and on the last day he will communicate personal resurrection to all his people, too. Men will be reunited in their own selves, as their bodies receive new life and begin to function in perfect and permanent fashion. As a sample of how this will be we have only to look at Mary. He has already given this gift to his Mother. She lives in heaven, body and soul.

At that time, too, Jesus will pronounce final judgment on everyone. Then we will know how God's plan for man worked out in the life of everyone. Then, the people who accepted God and followed him in their lives, responding to the best of their ability to what he asked of them, will enter their father's house for ever. The others who rejected him and refused to follow his path and turned down his demands on them, will be free to follow the life they have freely chosen. They will be left to themselves as they wished, but they will live forever separated from God and the happiness that life with him brings.

► Reading from Jn. 5:19-30

We call these two lives Heaven and Hell. Heaven is the life of perfect union with God shared by those who have accepted their Lord and Savior. It is a total sharing of all that God has and is. Since God is full and perfect life, this means total happiness because this is what men were meant to have when God created them. Heaven is our true home and it will never be taken away. It is hard to describe because there is nothing like it anywhere. All we can do is imagine all of the happiness that is possible and multiply this a thousand times over. This would still be only the merest hint of what heaven is really like.

Hell, on the other hand, is the opposite. It is misery and isolation. Men were meant for God and when they refuse to accept him they cannot find happiness anywhere else. So hell is a life of hatred and resentment and misery. No one goes to hell who does not choose it. God would rather everyone come to him and receive his life, but men are free and he will not force

them against their will. So there is a hell and it is very real. It lasts forever. It is a great mystery why anyone should choose this, but it is part of the mystery of human freedom. If there wasn't a hell, man wouldn't really be free. He wouldn't have any real choice. He would have to do what God wanted. The possibility of hell guarantees man's freedom.

When will the coming of Christ take place?

► Reading from Mk. 13:32-37

While no one knows exactly when it is going to happen, Jesus has given us certain indications that will tell us that he is coming.

► Reading from Mk. 13:3-27

The language of Jesus here is difficult for us because it is from the Old Testament. The Apostles and his other Jewish listeners understood it better than we do because they had been brought up on it. What it boils down to is this: first, there will come terrible persecutions. This is not unusual in the history of the Church, since there have been bloody persecutions in the past and there are some going on right now in Iron Curtain countries. But apparently this will be the worst of all. This means that many Christians will lose their lives and there will be great fear and lots of people will abandon their faith. Next, there will come a great world leader who will try to set himself up in the place of God. He has always been referred to by Christians as the 'Anti-Christ.' We don't know who he is yet, but he will be the head of a great world-wide power. He will try to act like God. In the middle of all this, just about the time when it looks as though the Church is going to go down, suddenly there will be strange and tremendous signs in the sky,—sun, moon and stars will change and there will be great movements of light and power. This is the signal that Christ is coming. Then he will appear in some way that will be evident to all. He will appear in all his glory and power and then will be the resurrection and judgment. Word history will be over and the reign of God will be perfectly established forever.

This much we know from what God has revealed to us. But we won't know when really, until it happens. People get upset about this when they think of the end of things, but it will not be a disaster, except for the persecutions. The world will not be destroyed. It will be fulfilled instead, and begin a new kind of existence. Everything will be changed for the better and man and God will not only be reconciled but will live together in the same life. There will be no more sickness, death or suffering. There will be no more faith or hope or sacraments either. They won't be necessary. There will be only love and perfect harmony among God and man as man comes to know God as he really is.

This will be the windup of God's plan and we know that it will be successful. We believe in it now. Then, we will see how it succeeded.

Meanwhile what about the people who are dying everyday? What happens to them between now and then?

MYSTERY OF DEATH

We really don't know much about death and the hereafter except in a very general way. It is impossible to describe because we have no experience of it. We know it is not the end and we know that life goes on, but in a different way. What happens at death is that a person's soul and body are separated for a time. The body is buried and the soul goes on to its own particular judgment and life with God or life in hell. Time stops at death so there is no way to figure out how long all of this takes and what it is like to live without a body. These are minor mysteries about God's plan which will be cleared up as we live through them.

Purgatory is another one of them. We don't know much about this either. The best thing to say about it is that it is a process of purification which a soul goes through who has done a lot of selfish things in life and hasn't worked too hard to grow in the love of God and neighbor. Many people we know are pretty good but they need a lot of improvement. If they don't work hard with God in this life, God works hard on them in the next. He helps them get rid of all the selfishnesses and other obstacles that might prevent them from enjoying life

with him. There is no time in Purgatory so we don't know how it works out, but we do know that it is only a stage that some people pass through in their passage to heaven and the presence of God forever.

There is a special sign of assurance and help that God gives us when death comes near or when sickness and suffering become severe. Jesus spent much of his time healing the sick. We know that one of the main reasons he did this was to demonstrate that he could bring life to people. There are still instances where people are cured of severe illnesses in ways that can only be explained by the healing power of God. But Jesus has a special sacrament for all such situations. Through the sacrament of 'extreme unction' (last anointing) or the 'anointing of the sick,' Christ reaches out to the sick and dying of his people and communicates to them in special fashion his life and strength.

This action of Christ is a healing action. Very often it heals the body. But always it heals the spirit. It unites the person who receives it with Jesus in a special way that enables him to face his illness or death with calmness and trust in the saving power of God. It brings him God's forgiveness of his sins, if he is truly repentant.

► Reading from James 5:14-16

Thus, in our own personal history of salvation, there is a special event of God that helps us through a critical stage of our journey. God intervened many times to strengthen the faith of the Israelites on their journey through the desert. He made it possible for them to continue and to grow stronger through their trials. In the sacrament of the anointing of the sick he does the same thing to the Christian who is troubled and afraid. He gives him his own strength to lean on, assures him of his forgiveness and helps him through his illness or his death.

God's salvation is part of our life from beginning to end just as it has been part of the history of mankind from beginning to end. God is present to us every step of the way and he constantly crosses our path to find an entry into our life so that we can enter his. Jesus has opened the path for

us. His Church proclaims to the world that this is so. The Father draws men to listen. When a man realizes this and approaches Jesus, the savior takes him to himself and communicates his life to him through his sacraments. A man's life is then tied up with God forever, and henceforth God shares what he has with him and asks that man share what he has with God. This is the life of the Church wherein all men of faith share with one another what God has shared with each as they make their common way to their heavenly home.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What is different in the Christian view of world events?

What is the connection between death and sin?

Why must we wait until the end to experience all that Christ has won for us?
Is it fair of God to let anyone go to hell?
How will life in Heaven differ from life on earth?

How does the Gospel help your picture of the end of the world?

How can we call the sacrament of extreme unction a real healing?

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Does God Punish?

Gregory Baum, O.S.A.

The bible tells us many times in the Old and New Testaments that God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. How literally may we take this description?

There are many other images applied to God in the bible which we do not take literally. In the bible we are told that God may be angry or jealous, that God may repent of his deeds or even change his own mind. In this human language about God there is a divine message, which we miss altogether if we interpret the terms literally.

To say that God is angry is to insist on the intense love with which God accompanies his people and from which this people can separate itself by infidelity alone.

To say that God is jealous expresses his same intense love which will not leave his chosen people alone, even when they have turned their backs on him. To say that God repents of his deeds is to stress the gratuitous and undeserved character of God's love for men, and to say that he changes his mind reveals the ever-surprising extent of his mercy which exceeds any measure that man may expect.

The later biblical authors were quite conscious that they spoke of God in a poetic way. They realized that their words would be misunderstood if taken literally. For this reason they emphasized how different God is from man, that his ways are different from man's ways, that there is

no shadow or darkness in God, that he alone is holy, that he is so beyond the human condition, so transcendent to created life that to see him is to die.

Is the image depicting God as a judge rewarding the good and punishing the wicked to be taken literally? Do we grasp the divine message contained in this image when we accept it as it stands? Or are we in need of translating the image, with the help of other biblical teaching, in order to understand what the biblical authors want to communicate to us? The question is an important one. It is important whether we teach children about a God who punishes or a God who is always Savior.

Even beyond the catechetical question, there is evidence that many Christians—adult Christians—regard God as a judge who punishes. If they ask themselves what they really believe about God, it is often not that he is the author of salvation and the source of life, but rather that he is a distant onlooker, a scrupulous judge, approaching them as an accuser.

There is good evidence, however, that God is not a judge who punishes. If we take the biblical image of a judge who punishes literally, we in fact obscure the true concept of God, the eternal Father of Jesus Christ.

GOD'S JUSTICE

In the bible God is called the just one. What is this justice of God? According to the Old Testament authors, the justice of God is not the quality whereby God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. God is just when he intervenes in the lives of the underprivileged, especially orphans and widows, to save them from the injustices of men. "He executes justice for the fatherless and the widows, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing" (Deut. 10, 18). God is just when he defends the cause of the innocent. God is just when he establishes those who have been exploited by wicked men. God is just when he saves the poor.

In the later prophets, the justice of God is the intervention of God in the lives of the poor to save them, ultimately, from their sins. The psalmist sings: "In your justice give me life" (Ps. 119, 40). God is just

when he forgives sins. Throughout chapters 40-66 of the Book of Isaiah, we are told that the justice of God is his merciful intervention in the lives of his people in order to save the entire human family. The justice of God equals divine salvation.

When the priest in the prayers at the foot of the altar recites *Judica me, Deus*, he does not ask that God be his judge, rewarding him for his good deeds and punishing him for wickedness, *Judica me, Deus* means: "Save me, O God."

This teaching is taken up by St. Paul who tells us in the epistle to the Romans that in the Gospel of Christ "the justice of God is revealed" (Rom. 1, 17): this justice is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. In the New Testament God is just when he justifies sinners.

A SAVING GOD

This central biblical theme of divine justice brings out the fact that God is one who intervenes as Savior in the lives of men. God does not punish, but saves.

In biblical revelation, God is often depicted as judge. He judges a man's innermost heart. This judgment God exercises, above all, through his Word which like a double-edged sword penetrates deeply into the conscience of man. God's Word is judge because it accuses man: it reveals to man his faults and failings; it brings man face to face with what he is in reality, a sinner in the need of mercy. This judgment of God is part of the Gospel itself. For before God grants pardon he reveals to us in judgment what our sin is and how much we stand in need of his forgiveness.

God continues to be judge whenever the Good News is proclaimed to us. This judgment is the reverse side of grace. In the liturgy we are made to face, through the proclamation of the Word, the extent to which our lives have been damaged by sin, by selfishness or hidden self-hatred, and it is only when we are willing to step under the judgment of God and accept his Word as the rightful sentence that we en-

counter in the same Word the message of pardon and the new life of grace.

It is therefore as Savior that God is judge to us. Through his merciful intervention in the lives of men he makes them face their illness and enables them to receive his remedy. The message of salvation judges and forgives. Grace is judgment before it is pardon and new life.

If this interpretation of God as Savior is correct, what then is meant by the biblical image of God as judge of the wicked? What is meant by punishment? What do the biblical authors mean when they present God as a judge who inflicts punishment on those who have transgressed his law?

RESULTS OF SIN

According to the understanding of human life presented in the bible, the sin of man creates confusion in the order established by God. Sin initiates chaos; sin destroys man's relationship to God; sin vitiates man's relationship to society and to himself. The destruction which sin initiates is like a disease spreading in the heart of man and his environment. The sin of man generates a web of evil consequences, a pattern of destruction, which moves ahead with stern inevitability. Man cannot stop the web of destruction his sin has produced.

Eventually the widening circle of destruction will come upon him as his punishment, not indeed as a punishment imposed by God, but as a punishment that is the necessary and ineluctable consequence of his sin. Between sin and punishment there is an automatic connection, a necessary chain, which no man is able to interrupt. Man, the sinner is caught. He may escape the chaos initiated by his sin for a time, but eventually it will catch up with him and be his punishment.

When God intervenes in the life of the sinner, he always acts as Savior. He breaks the automatic connection between man's sin and his punishment. God saves men from the destruction which their wickedness has produced. God is never one who punishes; God is always Savior, always one who mercifully and gratuitously saves men from self-generated punishment.

If this is true, we may conclude that

the biblical passages and the ecclesiastical documents presenting God as a judge who punishes the wicked may be understood correctly only if we do not take them literally. To grasp the divine message in this biblical image we must divest it of the implied anthropomorphism. To say that God is a judge who punishes is to impress upon Christians that sin is not simply an evil action in a man's life which he may forget after he has committed it; sin is a source of chaos in the lives of men from which they cannot save themselves. When the bible says that God punishes the wicked, what is announced is the inevitable chain between man's sin and his punishment, as well as the total incapacity of man to save himself from the web of destruction that he has initiated by his sinning.

God is always Savior. Whenever he acts in the life of a man, he frees him from the devastating consequences of his sin, his egocentricity and his hidden self-hatred. Does this explanation do justice to the teaching of the Church? It leaves untouched the teaching about the judgment men must face after they die. The disorder generated by sin deforms the personality of the sinner; hence, when after death he is made to face what he really is, the punishment comes upon him as the ultimate consequence of his own sinful ways. God does not impose punishment. It is man himself who is the author of his punishment.

GOD'S PURPOSE

God comes into his life always as Savior. Even after death God acts in men who have trusted him so that they may enter into full union with him. According to Catholic teaching, if God's redemptive action has not prepared a man for immediate union with him but has, nevertheless, opened his heart in faith, then the final purification (as it were, through fire) will happen after death in the state the Church calls purgatory. If a man has totally turned away from the source of goodness and has refused to let God in any way be his Savior throughout his lifetime, then, according to the biblical account, the chaos generated in that person is so all-pervading that even after death, through his previous choices, he will be unable to acknowledge

the presence of the saving God. Hell, in the biblical perspective, is not inflicted by God; it is a situation created by man himself.

If God always intervenes in the lives of men as Savior, then among the several traditional doctrines of the atonement we will have to be careful how we interpret the doctrine, proposed by St. Anselm, that through his propitiatory sacrifice Jesus placated his eternal Father who was infinitely offended by the sins of mankind. We do not wish to think of God as an angry Father. We do not wish to regard God as one who, after having been insulted, demands satisfaction from the offending party through the suffering of his Son Jesus on the cross. We do not wish to regard the loving self-surrender of Jesus on the cross as a payment to placate an offended deity.

The great event working man's salvation, which is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, is explained in the scriptures and the tradition of the Church in many ways. We wish to focus on those doctrinal explanations which make it quite clear that God the Father is Savior, that God acts in the history of man always and everywhere as the Lord of mercy and the Author of life.

God acted in Jesus Christ to make salvation available to the whole human race. In his life, and more especially in his death and resurrection, Jesus was totally surrendered to the will of the eternal Father, revealing both the infinite love of the Father and the murderous and death-dealing character of human sin. In the central redemptive event of the death and resurrection of Jesus, God the Father provided a way in which the entire human family, estranged from him by sin and destined to self-destruction, might share in the self-surrender (or sacrifice) of his Son and thus be united to him in doing his, the Father's will.

A share—a growing share—in the redemptive event (which includes forgiveness of sins and the communication of a new life of obedience) is granted to man through a living faith, the celebration of the sacramental liturgy and the entry into a community of love with the brethren. These few remarks suggest that a doctrine of the atonement can be spelled out, in

harmony with scriptural teaching and ecclesiastical magisterium, which does not require Christians to regard God in a literal sense as an angry Father who demands satisfaction. God is always Savior. Man is the sole cause of his alienation and punishment.

The images and concepts of God which the Church communicates in its teaching have a deep influence on the lives of Christians. Who is God for us? What do we think of him deep down? Do we regard him as one who saves, or do we fear him as the judge who rewards and punishes? Even though the eternal Father of Jesus Christ is always Savior, the language about the punishment he inflicts and the wrath he holds against the wicked has a divinely-inspired meaning.

LIFE'S MEANING

As explained above, it communicates a divine message about human life and the destiny of the sinner. For this reason, we use this biblical imagery in preaching and ecclesiastical documents. But we should also purify the images of anthropomorphisms in our own minds and then clarify their real meaning for the Christian people. In the terms of the inspired anthropomorphic poetry proper to the bible, God is a judge who punishes the wicked; however, the full message of God revealed in the bible and preached in the Church seems to be that he is always Savior.

Does this interpretation of biblical imagery lead people to abandon all fear of God? According to the scriptures, fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. By this "fear of God" is meant the reverence and awe which men have before the all-holy God whose being is totally incompatible with darkness, sin and evil. Yet there is another kind of fear, a fear of punishment, a fear less lofty but, at times, also God-inspired. This fear of the punishment for sin is not a fear of God—for God is always Savior—but fear of the ineluctable consequences of sin which will eventually catch up with us and be our punishment. Of this we may rightly be afraid. But there is never any reason for man to be afraid of God. He, the Lord, the Creator, is Savior, Friend, Healer, Comforter, Source of mercy and Author of life.

The Church's Problem With the Bible

Bruce Vawter, C.M.

The principal challenge that confronts the Church in respect to the Bible is that of translation. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council made this quite explicit in the *Constitution on Divine Revelation*. "The Christian faithful," they said, "should have easy access to Sacred Scriptures . . .".

That statement might seem commonplace, but actually it is as novel in the Post-Tridentine Catholic Church as the Council that produced it. For the principle of "easy access" to the Scriptures was hardly the mind of the Council of Trent, and even less that of Paul IV or Sixtus V, upon whom the implementation of that council's decrees devolved.

I hope the Second Vatican Council's positive affirmation of the needs—and the liberty—of the children of God regarding the Scriptures presages the elimination of the remaining obstacles to easy access which Canon Law once felt it necessary to place.

For example, in this post-conciliar age there should no longer be any need for a specifically "Catholic" edition of any version of the Bible which has been produced by a non-Catholic scholarship of whose competence and probity there is not the slightest doubt. [A "Catholic" version of the Revised Standard Version, known as the Oxford Annotated Bible, was published during the past year with the *imprimatur* of Cardinal Cushing.] Whether modified textually or only by footnote, such a "Catholic" edition implies a sectarian character to biblical translation that is alien to its present-day spirit.

I would trust that in the days to come we shall cease to think of a version of the Bible as "Catholic" or "Protestant," except perhaps as we use these terms as handy labels referring to the provenance of the particular translation.

One can only applaud the ecumenical openness that prompted Catholic scholars and bishops to give us a new "Catholic version" of the Protestant's Revised Standard Version.

But it is an ecumenism that is somewhat anachronistic in these days and times. Far more in keeping with the ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, and far more deserving of being considered the first truly ecumenical Bible in English is the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine version. For the Council encouraged Church authorities to approve translations "produced in cooperation with the Separated Brethren." And for several years now those of us engaged in the CCD version have had the active assistance of various distinguished biblical scholars. They have helped not only in the original translating, but in the editing and revision as well.

The ecumenical aspect of this cooperation is underlined when one realizes that it was our very real *need* of these men and their scholarship that dictated our call to them to assist in the completion of our work. By approving this Protestant contribution to the production of a Catholic-sponsored Bible translation, the Bishops on the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine have indicated the pattern of one highly-important manifestation of the Biblical ecumenism of the future. They have also pointed out the only way that can lead to a truly common Bible for all Christians.

In the same spirit, the Bishops have ap-

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proved of our adoption in the definitive edition of the CCD version of the Bible of the standard English spellings of biblical names that appear in all our general works of reference and have become enshrined in our literature. [These identical spellings also appear in the English version of the Jerusalem Bible, and in the Oxford Bible mentioned previously.] Now Catholics and Protestants alike can say Noah, Joshua, the Queen of Sheba, Elijah, Isaiah, instead of the Noe, Josue, the Queen of Saba, Elias, Isaias of the Rheims-Douay. This decision is in the best Catholic tradition of acknowledging the historical facts of life, and it marks the abandonment of a nomenclature which, whatever its venerable associations, is a parochialism in modern-day life—the language of a ghetto.

The Council spoke of "suitable and accurate" vernacular translation as necessary for our contemporary needs. If we explore the meaning of these terms carefully, I believe we shall be able to find in yet another way a sign and symbol of the role that the Scripture must play in this post-conciliar age.

WORD OF GOD

When we say "Word of God," we speak a relative term. Word is not word until it has been heard, taken in, until it has fulfilled its function of bringing together two minds, two hearts, two persons. For this reason there is much to be said for the oft-repeated formula that defines the Bible as not so much the *word* of God as the *means* whereby the word of God is mediated. Jesus Himself, the Word of God Incarnate, was and is God's word to man only through faith. And faith is the other half of the process of divine revelation, the response by which the Christ-event is defined: "We saw His glory, glory of an only Son coming from the Father, full of grace and truth . . ."

The letter of the Bible, the language used by its inspired authors, corresponds to the fleshly humanity of the Word of God made man. It is not, as some early Christians appear to have thought, a husk concealing rather than revealing God's word, and therefore an irrelevancy to the perception of that word which would be impervious to the normal means by which men receive

and understand communication—the heresy of docetism.

Neither is it, as a later age would have made it, simply a human word evoked by an experience extrinsic to itself, the evidence of, rather than the witness to the divine encounter of revelation, the occasion rather than the cause. This we might call a species of Arianism.

The Biblical word is a human expression of the incarnational presence of God in his prophet. It is a presence that manifests itself in what the prophet is, and does, and says, and writes. It is, therefore, a sacred word, a divine utterance establishing communication, calling for the response of faith.

It is by the same token eminently a human word, spoken through the mind and fiber of the distinct human person in whom and by whom the divine presence has condescended to manifest itself in word.

LIVING LANGUAGE

This is the significance of what the Council called "suitable and accurate" translations of the biblical word, translations which seek to put it across—to transfer it—from a human milieu now dead to one that is live. Of course this is never completely possible in the ideal sense, and so we have the continuing relevance of biblical languages for others than the biblical translator, as well as the relevance of biblical history and archeology. But it is the ever-increasing ability of man to approach his ideals which (together with the ever-changing human condition itself) makes new translations of the Bible both desirable and necessary.

No contemporary English translation of the Bible has any validity that does not speak in the language of Twentieth Century English. It is on this basis that the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Bible has been translated. To my knowledge, it is the first English translation of the Bible to break completely and finally with the several-hundred-year-old tradition of "Bible-English."

What Bible-English is, is well known. It has many virtues, among them the formation of a stately Jacobean literature including the Authorized Version of the Bible and

its numerous progeny, both biblical and non-biblical. This is a literature which deserves to be preserved in its own right as part of our heritage, along with the Elizabethan literature of Shakespeare and Spenser and the Victorian literature of Tennyson and Dickens.

It is, however, not a suitable vehicle for the word of God living in Twentieth Century England or America, nor does it accurately translate it.

RECENT EXPERIENCE

You know how suitably and accurately the CCD version, on the other hand, has translated this word because of the experience you have had with it in the liturgy—especially in the New Testament pericopes employed in the Liturgy of the Word.

These passages do contain some occasional infelicities, unconnected with the accurate transmission of the word, and these must be removed as hindering rather than aiding communication. However, the great virtue of this translation is to have revealed—to many of us for the first time—how the word can cut like a two-edged sword. How it can challenge our complacency! How it can shock us from our comfortable acquiescence to the conventional when we hear it in the genuine American English of our everyday speech rather than in period English! The CCD translation has caught the spirit of its journeyman Greek better than any other English translation of the New Testament. It is the Greek of fishermen and workers, of the market-place, the sports arena, the business docket. Or, if you will, of the TV commercial and the commuter's timetable.

We are experiencing something similar to what St. Paul's first converts experienced when they more than once reproached him for his lack of rhetorical grace—and whom he challenged through his solecisms and hanging participles and broken sentences to hear the word and power of the Lord working in the Spirit.

We have even had something of the experience of the first generation who heard the Word of life in Galilee—that generation to whom no sign was to be given save that of the prophetic word itself.

Surely all this is as it should be. The

Bible is not without its great literature and we must cherish it as such. It exists, however, not to please our ears with its declamations but rather that by its means we may become, as the Council calls the Church in its hearing of the scriptural word, "pupils of the Holy Spirit." The more the word is freed of the encrustations of artificiality and pietism with which we have long tended to cover it over, the more it will come through to us loud and clear as the living word that it is. It will come through unmistakably, in our own language, not necessarily to confirm us in the ways that have become familiar to us, but to reveal to us anew every day, from faith speaking to faith, the ways that are God's. This, as I see it, is the great and formidable task of the biblical translator in his service to the people of God.

In these times we must think of biblical translation also in its hermeneutical dimension. As becomes more and more evident every day, we must think of the translation not only of words and figures and concepts, but of the *very meaning of the word itself as it speaks to man in his existential situation*.

VITAL MEANING

When I call this process *translation* I use the term deliberately, in preference to words like transformation or transmutation. It is not that the word of God can be made anything more or less than what it was and is; when we think otherwise we think outside the ambit of the faith of the Judeo-Christian revelation. But what has indeed been transformed—and transformed many times over—is man himself.

What has been transformed has been his human condition, his knowledge and understanding of himself, and of the world in which he lives. The Council took cognizance of these social and cultural transformations in the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. It is this *transformation from the condition of biblical man* that requires the translation of the biblical word. Or, as the Council put it, "the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel."

Here are some of the areas of concern in which I look forward hopefully to the translation of the biblical word in this age:

The term is unwieldy and perhaps ill-chosen, given the ambiguity that attaches to the word *myth*. Yet it is intended to designate a true and necessary interpretative reading of the Scripture that began with its very writing, and, in part, can even be discerned within the history of its compilation. By *myth* we do not here mean what is false, but rather the categories within whose framework men understand truth.

These categories have changed and do change, and because they do, the biblical word has had to be translated and demythologized—re-mythologized, if you will—in its passage from the Semitic world of the Bible into the Platonic world of the Fathers and on into the Aristotelian world of the high Middle Ages.

RELUCTANCE TO CHANGE

And there some would have called it to a halt, had they been able. The extreme reluctance with which the Church bowed to the Copernican revolution is a fact of which we are all painfully aware, and we know too well the enduring scars that the ensuing conflict wrought on our history and in our memories. But bow to it the Church finally did. And if we are able to smile today at the naïveté of the Russian cosmonaut who has found God nowhere in space, it is because Copernicus and Galileo finally taught us to demythologize the biblical word about a heaven that is up. We have yet to cope successfully with other revolutions in human thought.

The biblical word has not yet been translated into the world view of Darwin or Teilhard. In the view of some Christian men it will not be and cannot be. Perhaps they are right, but I strongly suspect they are wrong. And because I suspect that they are wrong, I also suspect that this translation will be one of the major tasks confronting theologians in this post-conciliar age.

The doctrine of original sin comes immediately to mind as an example of a biblical word that needs translation into terms that correspond with the experimental realities recognized by modern man. Such was, in fact, the assertion of Pope Paul last July 11 to a group of theologians and scientists gathered in Rome to discuss this subject. "You propose," he said to them, "to put

into relief the present state of exegesis and of Catholic theology regarding the dogma of original sin, with special reference to the findings of modern natural sciences such as anthropology and paleontology. The fruit of your comparative research should be a definition and presentation of original sin that is more modern and that better satisfies the demands of faith and of reason that modern men feel and manifest."

ORIGINAL SIN

It seems hardly necessary to point out that original sin is a fact that modern man has experienced. A generation that has seen Belsen and Auschwitz, for whom the insanity of warfare has become a normal way of life, that has looked into the hate-filled eyes of mobs white and black in our city streets—this generation surely knows what original sin is. It is in no danger of repeating the philosophical errors of a bygone generation elaborated in disregard of human experience, which decreed the inevitability of progress as a mathematical abstraction, or studied the native nobility of the savage in the quiet of the library.

This generation is aware that man, who is literally capable of rising to the stars, has known and does know sin. From one point of view, therefore, the Christian faith which proclaims original sin as part of its definition of historical man never more corresponded to human experience than it does now. Few men, of whatever persuasion, would be disposed to quarrel with the definition of original sin offered by Father Hulsbosch in his well-known book, *God in Creation and Evolution*: "The powerlessness, arising from nature, of man in his uncompletedness as creature to reach his freedom and to realize the desire to see God, insofar as this impotence is put into the context of a sinful world."

From the same point of view, probably the good news of the Christian Gospel was never more actual than it is today—that there is a way out of this impotence, in a faith that imposes meaning on an otherwise meaningless existence, that restores to man his dignity with a love that banishes hatred, a sacrifice that is the only exaltation of self, and a surrender that is the true victory.

Thus we have the extreme relevance

of a biblical word which is, above all, the perennial word of the Church to the world of man. But we also know the many difficulties faced by this word in the world to-day. And not only men of learning and education, not only people of studious and thoughtful habits, are experiencing problems with the doctrine of original sin. No preacher, no lecturer, no catechist of the young can long avoid questions about Adam and Eve, the garden, the serpent. Meanwhile, a picture of man's origins quite alien to that supposed by the biblical authors is available to anyone who can read in paperbacks at the corner drugstore and to anyone who can see in reconstructions in any museum of natural history.

We have already demythologized the biblical imagery in part. I believe that our task in the post-conciliar age is to complete the process. It is not a task for clumsy fingers, as Pope Paul has warned. Nevertheless, it is a task that must be undertaken, that the relevance of the Gospel be unimpeded.

OLD TESTAMENT

There are signs that we will see greater attention given to the *relevance* of Old Testament History. I was somewhat disappointed over the impression given by the fourth chapter of the *Constitution on Divine Revelation* that the Old Testament is important principally as it serves to explain the New. This is unfortunate, for in this respect the Council did not fairly represent contemporary Catholic awareness of the meaning of the Old Testament.

If the Old Testament is to be reduced by us to an irrelevancy except in its purely anticipatory functions, we would thereby completely falsify the history of God's dealing with man, which is a history of condescension. If it has no relevance except to the New Testament, we must conclude that the people of the Old Testament were of concern to God only that they might yearn for a salvation they could never possess. By such a narrow view of the history of salvation we would withdraw all meaning from the faith of Israel. We would contradict the New Testament itself, for if the Gospel teaches that all men have been saved by the grace of Christ, it insists no less that the

faith of Israel and our own is one.

The history of the Old Testament is vital to us, because it is the beginning of our history—that is, the history of the People of God. And it is vital precisely because it is a history, and thus defines the title by which we call ourselves the People of God.

As Professor George Ernest Wright wrote some years ago, "It is by the spectacles of the Old Testament that our eyes must be focused upon the light in Christ; otherwise the light will be blurred and we shall not see correctly."

Greater attention is going to be given to this history in the future, in view of the concept of salvation history which has been successfully popularized in our catechetics, and endorsed in the conciliar documents. Here—and especially here—we have a continuing need of biblical translation, for it is vital that the history with which we deal be history as it is meaningful to contemporary man. The uncritical history of the biblical authors must be translated into the critical history which is one of the modern world's contributions to man's epistemology, which alone we recognize as providing us a basis for the contemplation of real events.

Salvation history cannot be permitted to degenerate into a series of pretty stories unrelated to fact as we know fact. The types and themes it provides us must depend on something more real than pious imagination and the allegorical bent of mind. I look for more, not less attention to be given to the importance of historical and form critical studies in the teaching and the profession of our historical faith.

NEW TESTAMENT

This confidence may be equally asserted in respect to New Testament history. In the fifth chapter of their *Constitution on Divine Revelation* the Council Fathers incorporated the substance of the 1964 *Instruction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission* on the form critical study of the Gospels. This rich field of study has yet hardly been adverted to in our teaching of religion; its results will affect the life of the Church again as it was once affected in the period of the Gospel's formation.

The dismal episode of Modernism occurred between the First Vatican Council

and the Second, intersecting the period at about the halfway mark. It is probably safe to say that no heresy ever marked the Church and its thinking as this one did, or provoked such violent and lasting reactions. Very often it was not what the Modernists said that was wrong, but rather the reason for their saying it: it was rightly called "the distillation of all heresies."

Condemnations, however, have a way of becoming propositional rather than personalized: it is possible to know the seventy-nine Baian errors by heart without ever knowing that there was a Michel du Bay. Of course some of what the Modernists said was very wrong in any case, regardless of their reason for saying it. But it is also very true that many precious insights on which we now depend in our gauging of truth and relevancy came into the Church through Modernist hands, truths which we now label personalist or existentialist or phenomenological. It is also true that much of the methodology which we take for granted in scriptural studies and positive theology—form criticism, redaction-criticism, historical method, source-analysis—came from the Modernists, along with some of the very terminology that we now find indispensable not only to explain ourselves to a modern world but to explain ourselves to ourselves.

MODERN OR MODERNIST

Or if not from Modernist hands through hands that, by association, were thought to be Modernist. It has taken a long time, and the end is not yet, for the average Catholic to sort out and distinguish between what was Modernist and what was merely modern. It is still necessary sometimes to explain how "Modernist" terminology is perfectly innocent and valid when divorced from the erroneous presuppositions with which Modernism employed it—sufficiently necessary that my dwelling on that point now is not entirely an irrelevancy.

The period of "the Modernist crisis" was most definitely ill-suited to the assimilation of new insights into Catholic doctrine and practice from any source that had anything really new to say—or which said it in a new way. It is indeed difficult to imagine the Church of that period affirming—as the Fathers of Vatican II affirmed—that the

Church is "the pupil of the Holy Spirit . . . concerned to move ahead daily toward a deeper understanding of the sacred Scriptures so that she may unceasingly feed her sons with the divine words."

And this was a pity, for it was in that age precisely that the human mind and consciousness and their processes underwent clinical analysis for the first time, and something really new became known about the human personality—the recipient and the vehicle of biblical revelation. It was a great pity for many other reasons. Philosophy, psychology, the Protestant experience, biblical study on every level—all had much to offer to theology in those times. It took the Second Vatican Council—in many ways the most genuinely ecumenical council of the Roman Church—to show us how much, despite all official appearances to the contrary, the Church had been affected.

It may be hoped that "the Modernist crisis" may be declared over and done with. It is not simply a matter of eliminating the anachronistic and simplistic "oath against Modernism" imposed at various stages of ecclesiastical preferment both hierarchical and academic. It means a declaration that the Church has gone on, that it has confidence in its present and future, that it is content no longer to be the Church of Pius IX or Pius X simply because it is now the Church of John XXIII and Paul VI. The "oath against Modernism" ties the Church to Loisy and Renan and Tyrrell in a way that it should not be tied, and, perhaps unintentionally, opposes it to men like von Hügel and Newman and Acton in a way that it was never really opposed. The Church that produced the documents of Vatican II does not require the periodic reassurance of a loyalty oath of this kind.

JEWISH RELATIONS

The Church of the post-conciliar age also needs the development of a theology of the Jews. The need of such a theology is written in the melancholy past history of Jewish-Christian relations which began, as a matter of fact, with the New Testament itself. It was shown in the hesitations of the Vatican Council over its own *Declaration on the Jews*, welcome as that declaration eventually was. It has been shown in the observa-

tions of Bishop Carli of Segni both before and subsequent to the Council's declaration. And we do not have to go far to recognize the need through our own experience. A recent study conducted through the facilities of the University of California at Berkeley has shown the alarming correlation that can exist between what many Catholics and other Christians confidently assess as the beliefs of Christianity and the profession and practice of anti-Semitism.

The principal message of this study is not that we require some functional antidote to anti-Semitism; it is rather that anti-Semitism follows on a distorted concept of Christian orthodoxy that is almost untouched by the word and spirit of the Gospel. A theology of the Jews is needed if the Church is to understand itself—the People of God—in relation to this other people whom St. Paul tells us God chose irrevocably as his own. We must explore the meaning of this biblical word in our times, not merely out of compassion for the anguish of the Jews over the centuries and in our day, not merely out of compunction for all that Christian people have done to contribute to this anguish. We must explore it as an effort at self-understanding. The Council contributed greatly to this self-understanding in its *Decree on Ecumenism* by defining the relation of the other Christian churches to us—separated from us, yet beneficiaries of the same Holy Spirit of God. Our eyes have been lifted by this decree to contemplate a broader vision of the eschatological purposes of God. It is a vision within which the Jews should also be seen by us more clearly than they are now.

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL QUESTION

I would hope to see (and expect to see) a deeper penetration of the implications of New Testament eschatology for the life of the Church. At present there is a certain amount of confusion over the eschatological question (and I don't think that the present is essentially different from the past in this respect). It is a confusion that rises from the paradoxical character of the Gospel itself. What has been called "realized eschatology"—the conviction of the here-and-now

presence of the kingdom of God active and realized in this world—coexists comfortably in the Gospels and in the Pauline epistles together with the no less uncompromising affirmation that the kingdom is coming, that this is a world that is passing away, a world under judgment, to which Christians must give witness of the better things to come.

Final eschatology has often been distorted into a dualistic anti-humanism, which makes the Church an irrelevancy to this world which God loves and for which Christ died. This is the negation of the prophetic character which the Council ascribed to the Church. This sort of thinking is the hallmark of a religion interested in "saving souls," but which knows nothing of the God of Israel's prophets and of St. James, a God who concerns himself with equal justice before the law, with living wages and decent housing, with the human rights of all His children.

Realized eschatology can also be distorted into a "social gospel" by which the city of God, by which Christian witness is construed no longer as a word that it takes into the world, but a word that it receives from it. In this conception of Christianity there is no longer any place for eschatological witness, for the charismatic distribution of the gifts of the Spirit, for sacrifice, renunciation, celibacy, above all for what Harvey Cox calls the Church's exorcistic function in the world.

EVERLASTING WORD

Both of these extremes have been regarded as heresies throughout the Christian ages. Christian churches have suffered much from both of them, and have survived painfully. Prayerfully, our attentive hearing of the word of God will preserve us in the end from both of them.

My prayer is, in the words of the Council, "that through the reading and study of the sacred books 'the word of the Lord may run and be glorified' and the treasure of revelation entrusted to the Church increasingly fill the hearts of men. Just as the life of the Church grows through persistent participation in the Eucharistic mystery, so we may hope for a new surge of spiritual vitality from intensified veneration for God's word, which 'lasts forever.'"

Books Received

The Living Word Series
Gerard S. Sloyan, Editor
Helicon. \$1.25 each

This is a group of paperbacks on the leading themes of Scripture. Each book is by a noted scholar, translated from the French. The first six volumes of the series are available, each running to approximately 116 pages, and handsomely printed. The series could well be for many a golden key to the basic, constantly repeated themes of the Bible, making Bible-reading much more understandable and pertinent. The handy, pocketbook size makes for easy reading. Themes treated in this series include: The Message of Moses; The Temple of Yahweh; The Paschal Feast in the Bible; Salvation of the Gentiles and the Prophets; The Living Temple; The Spirit of God in Scripture.

Fundamentals and Programs
of a New Catechesis.
The Nijmegen Institute
Duquesne University Press. \$6.95

This compilation of papers by a team of experts was commissioned by the bishops of Holland. The translation amounts to an American edition with modifications adapted to American needs. It reflects the current healthy concern of European catechists with the psychological and sociological factors in religious education. And it is unmistakably personalist in its approach, aiming at a catechesis which provides the climate for the growth of an authentic living faith.

These papers by anonymous experts fall into two sections. The first part is concerned with fundamental principles and attitudes that must be taken into account if genuine religious education is to be relevant to our contemporary mentality and needs. The second section gives detailed programs for various age groups. Helpful suggestions include ways to assist children

and youths to find God in the actual world of today, and to relate content both to the liturgical seasons and to the students' particular stage of psychological development and social awareness.

There is some slight comfort in the fact that even the best of European catechists are struggling to find the proper relation between the home and the school in religious education. While the book insists on the primary role of the parent, the main emphasis is on what is to be done in schools with an assist by parents. This suggests that we in America, who lag behind Europe in catechetics, should be wary of hasty solutions to our problems. We need much more research, experimentation and experience.

The Future of Belief
Leslie Dewart
Herder and Herder. \$4.95

Reflective and committed Christians endeavor to place God and religion at the very center of their everyday lives. But many of them feel that this attempt is somehow more difficult than it need be. The Scriptural story of a loving God revealed in Christ who, though different from man and the world, is vitally present in man and all existence—often seems unnecessarily remote. And the very pertinence of religion to man's everyday life is called into question more seriously today than ever before by a wide variety of thinkers.

Men like Bishop Robinson—and earlier writers like Bultmann and Tillich—have addressed themselves to this problem. Leslie Dewart undertakes the task as a devout, believing Roman Catholic. He is a critical theologian who contends that the divine revelation in Christ does not seem altogether relevant, comprehensible or acceptable to many because the Church proclaims the Christian mystery in the language and concepts of a culture that has vanished. He calls for a new conceptuali-

zation of the Gospel, one that replaces the hellenic expression, and one that while faithful to the divine revelation will reflect a radical reinterpretation.

In the development of his theory, Professor Dewart discusses the relationship between man's experience and his consciousness and the kind of conceptualization his culture makes congenial to him. One of the most valuable of his chapters is that on "Contemporary Atheism and Christian Theism." While he may be unduly critical of thinkers of the past, one can applaud his efforts to re-think the positive aspects of infallibility, continuity and a vital renewal of Christian doctrine. It is a thoughtful, exciting and an important book.

The Living Thought of St. Paul
George T. Montague, S.M.
Bruce. Cloth, \$4.50. Paper, \$2.25

This is an excellent introduction to the riches of St. Paul's epistles. One of the volumes in Bruce's *Contemporary College Theology Series*, it aims to lead the ordinary intelligent reader to the mind of St. Paul by a study of significant texts. Thus most of the great themes of biblical theology are elucidated by the latest scriptural scholarship and are related to doctrine. The author follows the order in which the epistles were probably written and thus includes many bibliographical details of St. Paul's life and missionary efforts, along with his trials and accomplishments. Father Montague has taught this material at St. Mary's University, San Antonio, and brings scholarship and clarity to answering many of the questions we frequently ask about St. Paul's meaning. A good guide to follow as we read the letters of the greatest of Christ's Apostles.

Come To The Father
(A Cathechetical Program)
The Paulist Press

This newest approach to the religious education of children is evidence of the increasing maturity of the new catechetics on our continent. It represents the combined efforts of a group of 30 experts in catechetics, psychology, sociology, theology and pedagogy. They tested the conclusions

of this collaboration in Montreal for five years. And for a year and a half, their work was adapted to the needs of children in the United States.

This presentation of the Gospel to youngsters aims at allowing God to speak his own word. The modern, colorful illustrations situate the child in his own place in the world made by God and constantly blessed by him. But the pictures point always to the story of salvation told in Scripture and celebrated in the liturgy. With great economy of words and simplicity, the profound theology of renewal comes across to children just where they are.

The plan aims to involve the whole parish in the project: children, catechists, parents and clergy. Texts include a teacher's manual, child's book, music selections and a handbook for Parent-Priest-Teacher meetings. Some fifty dioceses in the United States are now piloting this imaginative, practical, scholarly, promising endeavor.

J.T.M.

GUIDE

- A publication of the Paulist Institute for Religious Research.
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Guide Lights

THE CHURCH AS MEDIUM . . .

In his wondrous little book, *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan gives many an object lesson about man's proclivity for seeing only trees where there is in truth a forest. He cites as a useful example from the world of industry the case of IBM, a company that has become an adjective of our civilization. Specifically, he has this to say: "It is only today that industries have become aware of the various kinds of business in which they are engaged. When IBM discovered that it was not in the business of making office equipment or business machines, but that it was in the business of processing information, then it began to navigate with clear vision." This distinction between business and product offers a pertinent analogy for Catholic renewal efforts. For, when we reflect upon it, we should recognize that the "business" of the Church (if I may so describe it) is not so much "saving souls" as it is communicating Christ to the world. Salvation is really an effect of this communication. In this perspective, the standard activities of the Church,—preaching, the sacraments, and the whole apparatus of salvation become the "products" (albeit divinely fashioned ones) that the Church offers in carrying on her "business" even as IBM offers business machines for processing information. In both cases, the "business" is much bigger than any of the "products" and no single activity or line of activity of the Church can exhaust the possibilities for communicating Christ any more than the whole IBM line defines the limits of handling information.

MORE AND BETTER PRODUCTS . . .

The point of this particular object lesson for the Church is that authentic renewal probably should start from a consideration

of the business rather than the products. For, if we start with the Church's "products," with the best will in the world we are going to end simply with better liturgy, better preaching, better catechesis, better Christians, better relations between clergy and laity, etc. This is, of course, highly desirable but it is also a limited vision of the possibilities. When you think of your business in terms of the product you are putting out, then your efforts at improvement will be directed toward more and better products and all you end up with is a line of good office equipment. However, as McLuhan suggests, when you really understand the nature of the business in which you are engaged, you can create whole new systems and products that will exploit potentials of the business that are not found in any existing line. This is what got IBM really moving. A similar view might possibly do the same for the Church. Right now most of our attention seems to be concentrated on the "products." Reform and renewal are directed at existing structures, forms, and discipline. There is, too, the deeper and more important effort for spiritual renewal which can in no way be measured. All of these are absolutely necessary and must be a major concern of those charged with directing renewal. But in addition to these, can we not also create some new systems as a result of reflecting on the nature of our business?

THE BUSINESS OF REVELATION . . .

The Church as the sacrament of Christ reveals him by her very existence as well as in her life and actions. "Reveal" here means much more than simply disclosing Christ's presence and benevolent intentions. God does not show himself without also giving himself, and both of these elements are included in the notion of revelation and in our understanding of the Church's business. Obviously, too, both of these aspects are brought into play in what I have described as the "products" of the Church. The sacra-

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ments and the teaching of the Church both show forth Christ and communicate him effectively to the faithful, as does the witness of the Christian people at their best. However, when we consider the possibilities of other systems that might be created in order to exploit other wellsprings of revelation, then our vision widens and renewal can move beyond renovation of the salvation apparatus.

THE CHURCH'S PLACE OF BUSINESS . . .

That the Church has turned in this direction is evident in Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World with its commitment to deciphering ". . . authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs, and desires . . ." which the Church shares with other men of our age. In effect, the Church is projecting another system that will exploit other possibilities of revelation. She has declared herself in business wherever there are authentic signs of God's presence and purpose, for her task is to reveal him. If this means more attention to the happenings, needs and desires of men today than to the apparatus of salvation, this is no indication that the Church is failing in her duty or that she has gone over to the world. Instead, it means that she has judged that to be about her Father's business today includes revealing Christ in these particular loci of God's presence. She goes over there not simply to join the crowd, but to rip off the veil from these happenings, needs, and desires and show forth Him who dwells in them. Today there are more people clustered around these signs of his presence than around the ones we have come to associate more particularly with the Church, and that is why Vatican II has projected a new line of products.

DOING BUSINESS OUT THERE . . .

Launching another system in any business requires enormous work, planning and experiment without any assurance that it is going to come out right. We ought not to expect less difficulty in the Church. Small beginnings have already been made. Symbolically, the Church left her products at home and moved toward less certain signs of God's presence with the advent of the storefront community center. This is not a chapel or "branch office" for the more convenient display of her wares; it is more a receiving room where the raw human material of revelation gathers and the Church ". . . labors to decipher authentic signs of God's

presence and purpose . . ." in it. However, potent a symbol, this venture into another mansion of our Father's house is only a first step. To reveal Christ's presence "out there" will require the full resources of the people of God,—resources which, at the moment, are being partially squandered in debate over the design and quality of the salvation apparatus. Going back to IBM for the moment,—much current criticism of the so-called "institutional church" is really complaint about the caliber of the office equipment. What is not always noticed is that the Church (including her institutional element) is striving to create another line of products adapted to revealing Christ in another milieu. If the effort is successful it will probably prove that the "company" understands its business better than do some of its critics and that, whatever the condition of the original line of equipment, business is booming.

REVELATION'S FEEDBACK . . .

I have stressed the element of going out into the non-churchly areas of God's presence and revealing him to the men who gather there. But there is an enrichment that comes back to the people of God in this mission, too. The Council reminds us that we share these same happenings, needs and desires with the other men of our age, so that if we are successful in deciphering God's presence and purpose in these signs for others, we do it for ourselves as well, and very many of us have not yet seen God in these kind of surroundings. When we do, the closeness of his presence and the immediacy of his gifts should stir us to the depths. This ongoing revelation of God in man's personal life and in the life of mankind can then become a powerful source of renewal for the Church as well as a vital missionary system.

So many good people in the Church today are taken up with the quest for personal fulfillment and the exercise of freedom that it seems almost providential. It is quite likely that these very human needs and desires are being raised aloft at this time just because they *are* authentic signs of God's presence and purpose. So, perhaps a new and vitalizing source of renewal does lie just ahead. If that is the case, then more of our energies might be diverted from improving our current products and concentrated instead on achieving the breakthrough necessary to launch an additional system.

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